



SPEAKER BIOS
GLOBAL MEETINGS INDUSTRY DAY PHILADELPHIA

Maria Grasso



Maria is the Senior Vice President, Convention Division at the Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau.

She leads the convention sales and services teams in growing convention bookings, while positioning Philadelphia as a premier destination for meetings, conventions and events.

Maria has been with the PHLCVB for 22 years, and her work has resulted in award-winning meetings, conventions, and events hosted at the Pennsylvania Convention Center and throughout the City of Philadelphia.

In her previous role, Maria was Vice President of Sales & Convention Services with a primary focus on sales strategy and exemplary customer service. One of her signature accomplishments was securing and executing the 2017 NFL Draft.

Prior to joining the PHLCVB, Maria was the Director of Sales & Marketing at the Hawthorn Suites Hotel Philadelphia, managed by Vista Host. It was here that she had the opportunity to lead her first large-scale hotel opening. Prior to the Hawthorn Suites, Maria was the Regional Director of Sales & Marketing for Vista Host Hotel Management.

Maria is a member of Meeting Professionals International (MPI), Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association (HSMIA), Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA), and the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), Corporate Event Marketing Association (CEMA).

Charitable Work

Maria has given back to the local community by volunteering with local organizations like the American Red Cross, United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania, The Ronald McDonald House, and Jakes Place.

Maria is also the Executive Director of Get Your Rear in Gear Philadelphia, an event supported by the Colon Cancer Coalition. The Colon Cancer Coalition is a non-profit that oversees the continued success of [“Get Your Rear In Gear”](#) events across the United States.

Maria started the group in 2009 after losing both her father and grandfather to colon cancer. Under Maria’s direction, this event has raised more than \$3.0 million dollars in ten years. These funds stay in the region to fund research for colorectal cancer, educate the community about the importance of screenings and patient care.

Claire Greenwood



As the Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce for Greater Philadelphia’s regional CEO Council for Growth, Claire Greenwood leads the work of more than 60 business, higher education, and civic leaders who commit their time and efforts to enhancing economic growth and prosperity in the tri-state region. She also oversees the Chamber’s Select Greater Philadelphia Council which tells the powerful story of Greater Philadelphia’s unique business assets to inspire talent and companies to make the community their home. Both are critical parts of the Chamber’s strategy to improve the region’s global competitiveness. Through Greenwood’s direction these efforts harness the power of business and civic leaders to attract and retain talent, capital and companies and advocate for policies and initiatives that strengthen the regional economy to make Greater Philadelphia one of the global first-tier 21st-century innovation economies. In addition, she has been a part of the leadership team at the Chamber guiding the Philadelphia Regional Recharge and Recovery Task Force.

Ms. Greenwood graduated from the University of Delaware with a BA in Biological Sciences and a minor in psychology and holds a Master’s of Science in Organizational Dynamics from the University of Pennsylvania. Ms. Greenwood is a member of the Board of Directors for Campus Philly, Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey.

Kevin Kelly, CMP, DES, CASE



Kevin Kelly began his career in 1972 at a Holiday Inn in Newton MA. He's held hotel leadership roles in Guest Services, Front Office, Accounting, Loss Prevention, Catering & Convention Services, Property Sales and Global Sales with Marriott since 1979. Kevin has lived in the area since 1994 when he joined the pre-opening team of the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown but he left in 2000 to manage forty of Marriott's top Association Group Customers in the Greater Philadelphia Region as a Global Account Executive. In 2013 Kevin was recruited by ASTM International in W Conshohocken, the world's preeminent **Voluntary Standards Development Organization**. In his current role as Director of Meetings & Special Events he is responsible for all meetings & travel related procurement, a 6 person Staff that manages logistics for 125 plus annual meetings globally, and oversees catering/event operations at ASTM Headquarters' Conference Center Spaces. Kevin has been a GPPCMA Member since 2000, was on several Committees prior to being a GPPCMA Board member, became Chapter President in 2006 and stayed on the Board for several years as the Treasurer. Kevin has been on the PCMA Convene & Global Task Force Committees and is currently on the Events Industry Council 2022 APEX Commission.

John J. McNichol



John J. McNichol is President and CEO of the Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority (PCCA). With more than 1 million-square feet of meeting space in Center City Philadelphia, the Center is the economic driver of the region's hospitality industry, generating a regional economic impact of more than \$700 million annually. McNichol is responsible for the administrative oversight of the Authority and ASM Global, which manages daily operations. McNichol also interacts with a wide range of stakeholders, including the Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau, Visit Philly, the Greater Philadelphia Hotel Association, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, customers, trade unions, and contractors.

John has played a leadership role at the Center since 2007, when he was appointed by the Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives to serve as a member of the Pennsylvania Convention Center Authority Board of Directors. His work ethic, experience and commitment to the success of the Center earned him the respect of his colleagues on the Board, who elected him to serve as the Board's vice chairman. In that capacity, he helped implement a range of Board initiatives designed to make the Center more attractive and friendly to customers including changes to the labor supply model, and the hiring of private management firm ASM Global to provide greater depth and breadth of experience in the operations of the Center.

As part of the transition to ASM Global, the Board of Directors called upon McNichol to serve in an expanded role as President and CEO of the PCCA, a position he has held since 2013. McNichol immediately worked to implement important administrative and operational changes, including the successful negotiation of a new Customer Satisfaction Agreement with four show labor unions. That agreement included the adoption of progressive new work rules and expanded exhibitor rights that have made the Pennsylvania Convention Center more competitive resulting in record-setting growth in new business for the Center.

Prior to becoming President and CEO of the PCCA, McNichol served as a partner in the government relations firm of Greenlee Partners for 14 years. He also served in the capacity of managing partner for its affiliate political consulting company Keystone Strategies. Prior to joining Greenlee, McNichol served for six years as a Senior Vice President and Director of Government Affairs for Tierney Communications in Philadelphia and Washington, DC.

His background includes public service as legislative aide to a Member of Congress. In 1989, McNichol established and served as the first executive director of the Congressional Fire Services Institute, which is credited with increasing federal funding for first responders and legislation that has improved national standards related to fire safety. Under McNichol's leadership, the membership of the caucus grew to more than 450 members of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate – making it the largest legislative service organization in Congress.

John is proud to serve as a member of the PHLCVB Board of Directors, Philadelphia Sports Congress Board Executive Committee, Pennsylvania Tourism Partnership Steering Committee and the Reading Terminal Market Board of Directors. He is also a past Chairman of the Board of Rugby Pennsylvania – the state-wide league responsible for administering all youth and high school aged rugby across the state.

The Glen Mills resident is a graduate of Monsignor Bonner High School in Delaware County and received his bachelor's degree from Villanova University.

Michael Thompson, CMM



Driven senior-level event professional with strong accountable leadership. Holder of the Meeting and Events Industry's elite certification- Certification in Meeting Management (CMM). Client driven and customer focused individual with more than 20 plus years of project and program management experience. Focused on delivering world-class service while improving business operations. Strong negotiator with a 360° perspective at the negotiation table having held senior positions in various event functions, hotel sales, corporate events, association events, and CVB/Convention Centers. Reliable team player, and collaborator.

Strengths (as assessed by Gallup Strengthfinder™) Arranger, Strategic, Achiever, Context, And Maximizer.

SKILLS

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| • Project Management | • Leadership and Staff Management | • Budget Management and Oversight |
| • Meeting Management | • Negotiation | • Knowledge of event registration systems |
| • Exhibit Management | • Multi-Tasker | • Developer of strategy, operational plans |
| • Vendor Management | • Communication | • Developer of sound policies & standards |
| • Site Search | • Marketing / Public Relations | • Builder of strong relationships |